



**For Immediate Release
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Seniors Advocate seeking volunteers

BC's Seniors Advocate is continuing to recruit volunteers for a survey of 27,000 seniors living in 300 residential care facilities across BC.

"This is the first time in this province that we have had volunteers sit face to face with some of our most vulnerable seniors on such a large scale and the feedback we're receiving from both volunteers and seniors themselves is very positive," said Seniors Advocate Isobel Mackenzie.

More than 250 volunteers have signed up to be part of the Office of the Seniors Advocate's residential care survey team, and there are still a range of volunteer opportunities available with the project for individuals from diverse professional backgrounds, ages and ethnicities. This is the first time in the province feedback from seniors in residential care settings has been comprehensively collected.

"The stories I'm hearing from seniors so far are so interesting," said volunteer Kitty Yan. "The ability to engage in conversations with residents is like meeting with old friends. The process has been very rewarding."

Volunteers are asking residents a range of questions from the quality of food, to how they view care staff, with the goal of gauging resident satisfaction and providing a roadmap for improvements to quality of care.

"We should all get involved and work together to help improve the quality and condition of our long-term care facilities," said Amanpreet Powar. "Our family members and friends may one day require the support provided in these facilities. The most important thing I took away from the training was a new-found awareness of the living conditions in a long-term care facility. I used to think of the facility as a hospital, but now I understand that it is also a home for the residents," added Powar.

Feedback from seniors has been diverse, however a common emerging theme is the impact of having their voices heard. "A resident came to me and explained to me how a person had come to her and asked her questions for a long time," said Norma Sorensen, Manager at Mt. Tolmie Care Home. "The resident recounted how they just sat together and the person listened to her and she was just thrilled. As a manager I felt sad that being listened to was such a novelty for the resident."

To volunteer for the Office of the Seniors Advocate's residential care survey, visit www.surveybcseniors.org Volunteers can apply online or by calling the Office of the Seniors Advocate office at 1.877.952.3181.

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Background

Office of the Seniors Advocate Residential Care Survey

- The Office of the Seniors Advocate's Residential Care Survey will focus on 303 residential care facilities in the province, comprising 27,000 residents and their most frequent visitor.
- The project is being managed by the BC Patient Centred Measurement Working Group and Providence Health Care.
- Interviews will be conducted in-person by trained volunteers. A matched mail-out survey will be sent to individual resident's most frequent visitor.
- The survey will explore a range of questions relating to privacy, food, safety and security, comfort, respect and responsiveness of staff, personal relationships, medications and activities in the facility.
- The survey and its methodology were designed through a 14-month consultative process involving key stakeholders including facilities, health authorities, family members, union representatives, community groups and academic experts from across Canada.
- The project is working with survey vendor, National Research Corporation of Canada.
- Volunteers will be screened and if suitable will participate in a one-day training session and will be asked for a commitment of at least 30 hours over the survey period.
- Each volunteer will be assigned to a facility and will be responsible for surveying a certain number of residents in that facility. Administrative support will be provided.
- At all times the personal information of our residents and their families and visitors is protected and will only be used as authorized under the BC Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

- The survey will be conducted on a rolling schedule over the next four months in each of BC's five health authorities.
- Results of the survey will provide a road map for improvements of quality of care and services provided to residents and their families in residential care. Results of the survey will be posted publicly on the Office of the Seniors Advocate's website in early 2017.
- The Office of the Seniors Advocate is an independent office of the provincial government with a legislated mandate to monitor seniors' services and to issue public reports and recommendations for system improvements. The office also provides information and referral to seniors and their caregivers.